



Infant Formula Shortage

May 2022

We know that many North Carolina families and caregivers are worried about finding formula for their babies. Formula supply is an evolving situation. Many families are having trouble finding their usual formula, and some have needed to visit multiple stores. NCDHHS is closely monitoring supply, working with the federal government, manufacturers, and retailers to get more formula on North Carolina shelves. Our goal is to ensure safe and nutritious options for North Carolina families, and NCDHHS provides the following recommendations on what families can do and what they should avoid.

What can families do?

- We want families to know that most have multiple safe options for their infants even if their usual formula is not in stock. For standard milk-based or soy-based formula, a comparable other brand, including generic or store brand, smaller manufacturer, or organic options are generally fine. NCDHHS has created and distributed a [flyer](#) to help families understand their formula options. If a family is using specialty formula and not able to find formula for their child, they should work with the child's health care provider to determine the best feeding plan.
- Families are encouraged to purchase only the formula that they need for the next two weeks to help ease shortages.
- Families can turn to community organizations, reputable online retailers, distributors, and manufacturers as sources for finding formula. Contact [United Way's 2-1-1](#) or dial 2-1-1 to be connected to a community resource specialist who may be able to help you identify food pantries and other charitable sources of local infant. Certain milk banks accredited by the [Human Milk Banking Association of North America](#) (HMBANA) are distributing donated breast milk to mothers in need; please note that some may require a prescription from a medical professional. [Find an HMBANA-accredited milk bank near you.](#)
- Families can contact manufacturers for help in finding formula:
 - [MyGerber Baby Expert](#)
 - Abbott's Customer Service: 1-877-4Abbott or 1-800-986-8540 (recall specific information)
 - Abbott's [product request line and form](#) for metabolic formulas
 - Abbott is making limited quantities of EleCare available for those in urgent need. Health care providers can [submit a request online](#).
 - Reckitt's (Mead Johnson) Customer Service line: call 1-800 BABY-123 (222-9123)
- More specialty formula is being imported through [Operation Fly Formula](#). This formula is being distributed through usual channels to stores or health care providers, so families and health systems do not need to make special requests for these imported formulas.
- The FDA is easing some regulations to support the import of additional brands and types of formulas from overseas. Families can follow the updates on [FDA's website](#). Kendamil is one of the first brands expected to import formula with several standard formula types expected to hit store shelves in June. Kendamil has set up a [website for families to receive updates](#).
- Families using a combination feeding of breast milk and iron-fortified infant formula may wish to consider increasing the frequency of breastfeeding or pumping so that they do not need as much formula. Families can reach out to a [local lactation specialist](#) to try and help increase their supply of breastmilk.

[WIC](#) is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children that provides benefits for healthy foods, breastfeeding education and support, and health care referrals for low-income families.

WIC participants who cannot find formula in local stores should first contact their [local WIC agency](#) to get help finding available formula in the community. If formula is not available in local stores, the local WIC agency may be able to submit an order request for the formula from the manufacturer through the state WIC agency, pending availability.

For WIC participants with a specialized formula prescription, a medical provider must change the prescription. Talk with your child's health care provider about possible options during the shortage. In addition, local WIC agencies can help doctors and families with formula prescriptions that give families more options.

The WIC program also provides breastfeeding support and resources to families. Families participating in WIC may contact their local WIC clinic for additional breastfeeding support and breast pump issuance as appropriate.

- Women who are pregnant are encouraged to consult with a health care provider about breastfeeding their infant. Families feeding a baby with donor breast milk should only use milk from a source that has screened its milk donors and taken other precautions to ensure the safety of its milk, such as those accredited by the [Human Milk Banking Association of North America](#).
- If you see a formula price that seems too high, report it to the North Carolina Department of Justice by filing a complaint at <https://ncdoj.gov/gouging> or by calling 1-877-5-NO-SCAM.
- Families needing help with formula costs who have not applied for assistance are encouraged to learn more about WIC at <https://www.nutritionnc.com/wic/> or apply for Food and Nutrition Services (FNS, formerly known as food stamps) at <https://epass.nc.gov>. FNS benefits can be used to purchase infant formula.

What should families avoid?

- Do **NOT** make homemade infant formula. Homemade formula recipes can be very dangerous for babies since they have not been evaluated by the FDA and may lack nutrients vital to an infant's growth.
- Do **NOT** water down formula to stretch it out; it can be extremely dangerous to your baby to do so. Always follow formula label instructions or those given to you by your health care provider.
- Toddler formula and plant-based milk alternatives are not recommended before a child's first birthday.
- Do **NOT** buy formula from online auctions, unknown individuals, or unknown origins. Storage and shipping conditions may impact formula safety.

What is NCDHHS doing to help families?

- Sharing information, resources and recommendations with families and health care providers at www.ncdhhs.gov/formula.
- Monitoring the fluctuating formula supply across the state and keeping our partner organizations updated.
- Through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), connecting families participating in WIC directly to needed formula and placing bulk orders with manufacturers on behalf of local WIC agencies and the families they serve.

- Using available USDA waivers to help retailers continue to serve WIC-enrolled families during the shortage and help families return or exchange formulas included in the recall.
- Working with the federal government to waive additional rules for the WIC program to make it easier for WIC participants to access available formula.
- Providing guidance to local WIC agencies and health care providers to make it easier for health care providers to give WIC-enrolled families several options of formula types and sizes on a single prescription to meet their children's specialized formula needs.

What other resources are available?

- [HHS: Helping Families Find Formula](#)
- [President Biden's Fact Sheet](#)
- [AAP/Healthychildren.org Resource for Parents](#)
- [FDA Consumer Page on Powdered Infant Formula Recall](#)
- [USDA Infant Formula Safety](#)
- [FDA Infant Formula: Safety Do's and Don'ts](#)
- [NCDHHS WIC Program](#)
- [CDC's Relactation Resources](#)
- [WHO/UNICEF's Maximising Breastmilk and Supporting Re-lactation](#)
- [NC WIC Store Finder](#)

Where can breastfeeding families and expectant families find resources?

- [USDA WIC Breastfeeding](#)
- [NCDHHS Breastfeeding Promotion and Support](#)
- [Ready, Set, Baby](#)
- [Establishing and Making Enough Milk](#)
- [Ready, Set, Baby Live Online Classes Schedule](#)

